

Appln No. 10/622,198  
Amdt date September 1, 2005  
Reply to Office action of June 1, 2005

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A hinge assembly for coupling a spa cover to a spa, comprising:

a mounting bracket adapted to be installed near a top of the spa;

a slide bracket slidably coupled to the mounting bracket, the slide bracket having a front end and a rear end;  
and

a support arm adapted to be fixedly attached to the spa cover ~~to prevent relative rotational movement between the support arm and the spa cover,~~ wherein the support arm is pivotably coupled to the slide bracket at a pivot point ~~[[on]]~~ near the rear end of the slide bracket,

wherein the slide bracket is adapted to slide with respect to the mounting bracket independently of a pivotal movement of the support arm about the pivot point on the slide bracket.

2. (Currently Amended) The hinge assembly of claim 1, ~~wherein the slide bracket has two ends, wherein the end near the pivot point~~ rear end of the slide bracket is moved in an upward direction as the slide bracket is slidably extended from the mounting bracket.

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3. (Previously Presented) A hinge assembly for coupling a spa cover to a spa, comprising:

a mounting bracket adapted to be installed near a top of the spa;

a slide bracket slidably coupled to the mounting bracket; and

a support arm adapted to be attached to the spa cover, wherein the support arm is pivotably coupled to the slide bracket at a pivot point on the slide bracket, and

wherein the support arm comprises:

an elongated member adapted to be attached along a side of the spa cover;

a short member, which is pivotably coupled to the slide bracket; and

a connecting member between the elongated member and the short member, said connecting member having a curvature such that the short member is substantially perpendicular to the elongated member.

4. (Original) The hinge assembly of claim 2, wherein the mounting bracket comprises two side plates connected via a web, wherein at least one of the side plates has formed thereon at least one hole used to slidably couple the slide bracket to the mounting bracket.

5. (Previously Presented) The hinge assembly of claim 4, wherein the slide bracket comprises two slide plates connected

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via another web, wherein at least one of the slide plates has formed thereon an elongated opening coupled to said at least one hole via a pin to slidably couple the slide bracket to the mounting bracket, wherein the elongated opening is inclined with a first vertical level of the opening close to the pivot point being higher than a second vertical level of the opening away from the pivot point, thereby enabling the end near the pivot point to be moved in the upward direction as the slide bracket is slidably extended from the mounting bracket.

6. (Currently Amended) A spa system comprising:

a spa;

a foldable spa cover having at least two sections;

a hinge assembly for coupling the spa cover to the spa, said hinge assembly comprising:

a mounting bracket installed near a top of the spa;

a slide bracket slidably coupled to the mounting bracket, the slide bracket having a front end and a rear end;  
and

a support arm fixedly attached to the spa cover ~~to prevent relative rotational movement between the support arm and the spa cover~~, wherein the support arm is pivotably coupled to the slide bracket at a pivot point ~~[[on]]~~ near the rear end of the slide bracket,

wherein the slide bracket is adapted to slide with respect to the mounting bracket independently of a pivotal movement of the support arm about the pivot point on the slide

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bracket, such that the spa cover is adapted to slide rearward first and then rotated when the support arm is rotated about the pivot point.

7. (Original) The spa system of claim 6, wherein the mounting bracket comprises two side plates connected via a web, wherein at least one of the side plates has formed thereon at least one hole used to slidably couple the slide bracket to the mounting bracket.

8. (Currently Amended) The spa system of claim 7, wherein the slide bracket comprises two slide plates connected via another web, wherein at least one of the slide plates has formed thereon an elongated opening coupled to said at least one hole via a pin to slidably couple the slide bracket to the mounting bracket, wherein the elongated opening is inclined with a first vertical level of the opening close to the pivot point being higher than a second vertical level of the opening away from the pivot point, thereby enabling the rear end ~~near the pivot point~~ to be moved in an upward direction as the slide bracket is slidably extended from the mounting bracket.

9. (Original) The spa system of claim 6, wherein the support arm is attached to the spa cover via a metal plate disposed on an outside surface of the spa cover.

10. (Original) The spa system of claim 9, wherein the metal plate is affixed to the spa cover via a double sided tape.

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11. (Original) The spa system of claim 10, wherein the metal plate has a hole formed thereon, wherein a screw is inserted through the hole into the spa cover, and wherein the screw is anchored in the spa cover by rotating the screw.

12. (Original) The spa system of claim 11, further comprising a deformable anchor engaged with the screw, and wherein the deformable anchor is deformed and embedded inside the spa cover as the screw is rotated.

13. (Currently Amended) A method of removing a spa cover from a top of a spa and/or placing the spa cover on the top of the spa, said method comprising:

sliding the spa cover towards a rear end of the spa to a first position where a rear edge of the spa cover protrudes rearward from the rear end of the spa;

folding the spa cover into two substantially equal sections; and

rotating the spa cover to a second position where ~~so as to remove it completely~~ the spa cover is removed from the top of the spa, wherein the spa cover is slid rearward independently of its rotation, and

wherein a pivot point of the rotation is moved rearward as the spa cover is slid rearward.

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14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein [[a]] the rear edge of the spa cover is lifted [[up]] upward as the spa cover is slid towards the rear end of the spa.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein sliding the spa cover towards the rear end of the spa to the first position takes place prior to rotating the spa cover ~~so as to remove it completely from the top of the spa~~ to the second position.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein sliding the spa cover towards the rear end of the spa to the first position takes place prior to folding the spa cover into two substantially equal sections.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein folding the spa cover into two substantially equal sections takes place prior to rotating the spa cover ~~so as to remove it completely from the top of the spa~~ to the second position.

18. (Original) The method of claim 13, further comprising: rotating the spa cover so as to cover the spa about half way; unfolding the folded spa cover; and sliding the spa cover towards a front end of the spa.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18, wherein [[a]] the rear edge of the spa cover is moved downward as the spa cover is slid towards the front end of the spa.

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20. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein rotating the spa cover so as to cover the spa about half way takes place prior to sliding the spa cover towards the front end of the spa.

21. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein rotating the spa cover to the second position comprises rotating the spa cover so as to remove it completely from being over the top of a spa opening.